

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 481 820

CE 085 604

TITLE Culture and Tourism in the Learning Age: A Discussion Paper.
ISBN ISBN-1-84049-165-5
PUB DATE 2000-03-00
NOTE 17p.; First presented at the Local Government Association Culture and Tourism Conference (Bristol, England, March 2003). Small and light print may not photocopy well.
AVAILABLE FROM For full text: <http://www.lga.gov.uk/Documents/tourism/learningage.pdf>.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; Case Studies; *Cultural Education; *Cultural Exchange; Definitions; Educational Needs; *Educational Objectives; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Government Role; Guidelines; Holistic Approach; *Lifelong Learning; Needs Assessment; Position Papers; Postsecondary Education; Role of Education; Service Occupations; *Tourism; Trend Analysis
IDENTIFIERS Learning Society; *United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

Cultural services and tourism are among the United Kingdom's fastest growing sectors in terms of employment and consumer demand. Cultural services and tourism bring the following elements to lifelong learning: active rather than passive learning; a means of interpreting the world around us; exposure to cultures other than one's own; confidence and interpersonal skills; innovative uses of new technology; team-building skills; an expanding sector that values training and development; an accessible and inclusive environment; buildings and spaces that cost nothing to enter; a powerful means of communicating ideas; the experience of risk in a controlled environment; an opportunity to test the body and the mind; introduction to the natural world and the world of our ancestors; flexibility; opportunities for independent learners; options for learners to determine their own level of engagement; and fun. The cultural services and tourism sectors should promote their contribution and be represented in Early Years and Learning Partnerships. The forthcoming Learning and Skills Council should seek to establish links with cultural services and tourism. The Best Value initiative and new duty to promote economic, social, and environmental well-being will present local authorities with opportunities to take a holistic approach to strategic planning in the areas of education, lifelong learning, culture, and tourism. (Seven case studies are included.) (MN)

Culture and Tourism in the Learning Age

A discussion paper

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Key messages

- A broad definition of lifelong learning encourages innovative partnerships and increases opportunities for learners
- The cultural services and tourism can contribute significantly to lifelong learning in both formal and informal settings
- The cultural services and tourism sectors need to promote their contribution particularly in relation to raising educational standards, providing opportunities for excluded groups & individuals and the development of transferable skills
- Lifelong learning should be a key theme of local and regional cultural strategies and other strategic planning processes
- The cultural services and tourism should be represented on Early Years and Learning Partnerships
- The forthcoming Learning and Skills Council should seek to make links with cultural services and tourism agencies
- As a fast growing sector in terms of employment and consumer demand, the Learning and Skills Council needs to address the cultural services and tourism.
- Best Value and the new duty to promote economic, social and environmental well being will present authorities with opportunities to take an holistic approach to strategic planning

A previous LGA publication, *Enriching People's Lives*, has explored the contribution of the cultural services and tourism to the full range of the LGA's priority areas – including regeneration, social inclusion, community safety, public health and lifelong learning. In 1999, the LGA published *The Road to Regeneration* which expanded on the relevant chapter in *Enriching People's Lives*. This paper adopts a similar approach to the subject of lifelong learning.

The cultural services and tourism are among the fastest growing sectors in terms of both employment and consumer demand. Their impact on our lives is considerable but often underrated. In particular, their impact on how we learn about and participate in the life of our communities is often neglected, especially in the policy arena where the focus of attention is most often on formal education, training and employment. Even here, the impact of tourism and the cultural industries in promoting the development of highly trained individuals with transferable skills could be given greater prominence.

As the providers and facilitators of services covering education, lifelong learning, culture and tourism, local authorities are uniquely placed to develop an holistic approach to these four service headings. Best practice should aim towards linking all four of the headings to the same strategic outcomes.

This paper aims to do two things.

- To show how recent developments relating to lifelong learning intersect with current initiatives relating to cultural services and tourism.
- To provide quotable case studies which demonstrate the value of the cultural services to lifelong learning outcomes. A few case studies are included in this version of the paper. The range of work in this area is so large, however, further case studies are placed on the LGA website (www.lga.gov.uk).

The need for this paper arises because:

- Work on lifelong learning does not always recognise the contribution of cultural services
- This is a time of great change in both lifelong learning and cultural services – links can easily be lost or overlooked
- Definitions of lifelong learning are sometimes restrictive and often concentrate primarily on the vocational and formal
- Vocational learning can benefit from the input of the cultural services
- Learning for pleasure is important in its own right and helps develop skills which are applicable to formal learning
- There are particular training and learning issues within the cultural services sector which require examination



Before going on, it is necessary to define some of the terms used in the rest of this paper.

What are the Cultural Services?

This paper recognises a definition of cultural services which broadly equates to the range of activities for which the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has responsibility. In addition, the LGA would add parks (a DETR responsibility). Cultural services (or culture) is not narrowly defined here as meaning the arts (or the "high" arts).

The LGA has an Executive which deals with Cultural Services and another which deals with Tourism. There are, of course, many links between their work. For convenience this paper refers to "cultural services" and includes tourism within this.



What is The Learning Age?

"The Learning Age" is a term used to characterise life in Britain at the beginning of the 21st century.

It describes a point in history when developing new skills is a priority for individuals and the state. In "The Learning Age" knowledge and information are recognised as valuable commodities in their own right. In the Learning Age we are all encouraged to be "Lifelong Learners" – to continue developing new skills regardless of our age or situation.

The purpose of developing new skills might be

- To find employment
- To remain in employment in an increasingly flexible job market
- To pass formal qualifications
- To access information in order to participate fully in the community
- To communicate with those around us
- To use time outside paid employment in a way that benefits the community and/or enhances ones well being

A great deal of policy development has focused on the topics at the beginning of the list and much less on the latter topics.

For example, in *The Learning Age*, a Green Paper from the Department for Education and Employment published in February 1998, the aim was to show "how learning throughout life will build human capital by encouraging the acquisition of knowledge and skills and emphasising creativity and imagination." The outcomes were primarily related to formal

Case study: Kent County Council – an integrated approach

In 1997 Kent County Council (KCC) undertook a radical restructuring of the services it was responsible for and created a new organisation structure within an Education & Libraries Strategic Directorate. KCC identified key services concerned with "culture" and brought them together within a single division called "Community Services". The services brought together included Arts & Libraries, Kent Adult Education Service, Youth and Community Services, County Archives and Records and the County Sports Development Unit.

The ethos which underpinned this reorganisation was the growing awareness that cultural activity is becoming more important as a means of underpinning existing jobs and creating new ones; that it can be a driver for economic regeneration and is interlinked with lifelong learning. In itself, lifelong learning should not be seen as an issue for a single service but a strategic objective that pervades all parts of the cultural services.

One of the County's initiatives which epitomises the integrated approach is the regeneration of the "Sandwich Corridor". The cultural services have been deployed to contribute to public and business sector partnerships tackling the broad spectrum of economic and social disadvantage which characterises this part of East Kent. The County Council has begun a systematic study of the way each of its cultural services is used (and by whom and from which area) and is examining how they might link to projects aimed at regeneration. New integrated forms of service delivery are being explored including the use of ICT in libraries, adult education centres and the youth and community services to make cultural services more accessible to all and combat social exclusion.

Contact: Yinnon Ezra, County Community Services Officer,
Kent County Council (01622 696 500)

education and training and employment. It cannot be denied that these are important outcomes but they are not the only outcomes.

The recently published Learning and Skills Bill begins to present a broader picture of lifelong learning and its outcomes present considerable opportunities for developing links with the cultural services.

What is Lifelong learning?

Definitions of lifelong learning vary, as do ideas about how to deliver it. Lifelong learning is sometimes used as a synonym for the accumulation of vocational skills.

For the purposes of this paper, lifelong learning will be taken to mean:

The accumulation of skills and knowledge, for any reason, at any age, in a formal setting (such as a school) or an informal one (such as a sports ground or arts venue).

Lifelong learning can be:

- structured and facilitated (e.g. a training course with a qualification at the end) or
- self-started (e.g. a programme of evening classes taken for recreation or a visit to a library).

It includes (but is not narrowly synonymous with) activity which can be described as "education", "training", "developing skills", "adult education", "pre-school learning", "post-16 learning" and "recreational learning".

lifelong learning

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By defining lifelong learning so broadly it is possible to see the full range of inputs and outcomes that cultural services activity can have. Some of the existing literature omits any significant mention of cultural services because it focuses on a narrow definition of lifelong learning. By doing so it fails to appreciate the contribution of cultural services to an individual's or organisation's learning experiences. Lifelong learning in this paper's definition is not restricted to vocational skills and formal qualifications but can also mean (for example) developing inter-personal skills, developing an understanding of community and "learning how to learn".



Importantly, this paper does not divorce the terms education (in the sense of formal schooling) and lifelong learning. Rather it includes "education" as one part of lifelong learning.

What do the cultural services and tourism bring to lifelong learning?

Active learning not passive learning - Taking part in cultural activity usually requires effort and concentration. The maxim "I read - I remember; I do - I understand" certainly applies to cultural activity. Watching a film or a play can help the viewer relate to experiences in their own life or show them experiences new to them. Taking part in a play or film, even more so.

A means of interpreting the world around us -

The cultural services and tourism encourage us to consider our own communities and cultures new to us. Throughout history, travel and participation in cultural activities (in the widest sense) have been the most effective ways of broadening experience and understanding.

Exposure to cultures other than one's own -

Cultural activity often takes us outside the confines of our daily life - either in the imagination or literally. Taking a holiday to a new place introduces the traveller to new customs, languages and cultures. For many tourists in the UK (either UK residents or overseas visitors) the "content" of their visit - which might relate to history, literature, artistic or sporting events or the natural environment - is the main reason for the visit, rather than simply relaxation. Some holidays are marketed as study tours or residential courses.

Confidence and inter-personal skills – Many people take part in cultural activity because it presents the opportunity to meet with – and work with – other people. Just as team or group activities promote co-operation, cultural activity also helps many people to increase their own confidence by seeing what they can achieve. Travel and tourism also helps people to find the confidence to plan and to communicate with others (and perhaps to learn a new language).

Innovative uses of new technology – Visitors to libraries, museums and archives are becoming increasingly used to accessing the information they need through electronic means. This is because these services have begun to address the importance of presenting new technology in a way that is accessible, fun, useful and non-threatening. The important role of staff as facilitators is key.

Teambuilding skills – Participation in cultural activities often requires co-operation with those around us. Whether it is playing in a band, playing cricket, taking part in a play or going on an activities holiday, the participant learns how to relate to those taking part alongside them.

An expanding sector which values training and development – The tourism sector and the rest of the cultural services sector has acknowledged that the quality of its "product" is directly related to the proficiency of the staff delivering it. The increasing emphasis on training is driving the growth of the sector. Furthermore, the skills which the cultural services and tourism require (such as customer care or running a small business) are transferable to many other parts of the economy.

Learning, crime reduction and healthy living

The Aicosense Project led by Wigan MBC Youth Services and Sports Development Unit in partnership with Greater Manchester Police and the Wigan Drug Education Team, offers young people choices of sporting activity together with information on alcohol and drug related problems, in an informal setting. The project sets out to present objective information about the effects of drug and alcohol use in a way that allows young people to make informed choices. At the same time, it shows that sports activities in the area are suitable for young people and also affordable. The sports sessions were delivered by officers of the Greater Manchester Police who had to complete a Community Sports Leader qualification, while the Aicosense sessions were delivered by Youth Workers who had to attend a training day beforehand. In this respect, the project affords learning possibilities for the facilitators as well as the participating young people. In all 633 young people participated with an age range of between 8 to 16 years old.

*Contact: Rodney Hill, Director of Leisure Services,
Wigan MBC (01942 244991)*

Understanding the Countryside

Like all of the National Park Authorities, the Lake District National Park Authority has a statutory objective to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of National Parks. This includes providing opportunities for school age children such as: running GNVQ leisure and tourism courses; providing information for geography courses; facilitating links between the Youth Hostel Association and the NPA's Education Service and linking with the County Councils on initiatives such as Healthy Living during the school holidays.

*Contact: John Pattison, Chief Planning Officer,
Lake District National Park (01539 724555)*

opportunities

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Accessible and inclusive environments – One of the barriers to learning for many people is the environment in which it takes place. Schools and colleges, for example, do not appeal to all sections of the community equally. The cultural services bring the advantage of a range of environments – play facilities, parks, sports centres, arts venues, libraries and so on – which have a broader appeal and often make the difference between an individual choosing to learn or not.

Buildings and spaces which cost nothing to enter –

One of the most important aspects of accessibility is cost. Libraries, parks, museums, archives, play areas and sports grounds are sometimes, or always, free to enter. This enables people to use the facilities regardless of their income and also means that they can use them without making further commitment unless they chose to make it.



A powerful means of communicating ideas – The cultural services are primarily about communicating ideas. This is true not only of the arts, but of all other parts of the sector. Those in the cultural services are experienced at marrying "content" to an appropriate medium. Learning involves discovery as well as being taught. The cultural services can provide vehicles for both types of learning.

The experience of risk in a controlled environment

– An important aspect of learning is determining one's limitations. This might come about by putting oneself in a potentially dangerous situation, or by experiencing emotions which are unsettling, or by failing to achieve what one sets out to achieve. In some circumstances, such experiences can be harmful to physical or mental well-being. In the context of cultural activity and tourism, on the other hand, similar experiences can be beneficial by virtue of taking place in a supportive environment. Examples might include: the risks children take when they play; the risks one takes on an activity holiday; the experience of watching or taking part in a dramatic performance or the experience of winning or losing at sport.

An opportunity to test the body and the mind –

Maintaining physical and mental well-being requires effort and understanding. Through sport, exercise, children's play or dance people learn how to maintain physical well-being in a pleasurable way. Of equal importance, the contribution of the cultural services to emotional and mental well-being is considerable. Through cultural activity, people begin to understand the world around them and how to cope with its challenges.

An introduction to the natural world – Cultural activity takes place out of doors as well as in. Tourism in the UK often focuses on the national parks, seaside resorts or rural areas. Even in the centre of our cities, parks provide opportunities for people to see flora and fauna close up.

An introduction to the world of our ancestors – The archives service houses the raw material of the nation's cultural memory. The fact that genealogy is one of the most popular forms of self-motivated learning demonstrates the value people place on understanding their own heritage. The arts, museums and libraries and many tourist destinations all have, to some extent, a focus on the history of the nation.

Flexibility – Learning is a very individual thing. People have different abilities, interests, intentions and dislikes. The broad range of services which culture and tourism covers brings with it the advantage that different aspects will appeal to different people.

Opportunities for independent learners – Often, learning relies on other people's input – teachers, examiners, funding bodies. The cultural services present opportunities for people to learn independently. A visit to a library or a museum, travelling to another part of the country or attending a concert need involve no other person.

Options for the learner to determine their own level of engagement – the commitment which formal learning demands may deter some people. Somebody with family commitments, for example, may have difficulty attending courses on a regular basis. In the cultural services, the level of commitment is usually determined by the user. When and how often a person visits a library, goes travelling or takes part in sport is largely at their own discretion.

Awareness in Information Technology

To raise awareness and access to IT and IT training, Bournemouth Libraries has developed a partnership with BT (who provided funding for hardware), the local TEC (who provided funding for tutors) and the Lifelong Learning service in the Borough (who provided the tutors), to create two Community Learning Centres. The Centres provide taster sessions and accredited courses, such as pre-CLAIT. One Centre is targeting adult returners and long term unemployed to improve vocational skills. The second is targeting older people to bring the benefits of IT to this age group. The latter library is also working with the voluntary sector. Older people are trained in IT skills which they then pass on to other older people. In this way, learners are seen as advocates and mentors.

Contact: Stephen Godsall, Director of Leisure and Tourism, Bournemouth Borough Council (01202 451451)

Children's Literacy and the Summer Holidays

Essex Libraries offered children and young people throughout the County the opportunity to take part in the first national children's summer reading challenge. The Reading Safari was designed to stimulate and excite children about books and reading, thereby helping them to maintain reading and literacy levels through the long summer break.

39,000 children and young people completed the Reading Safari, resulting in 240,000 books being read by children of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. Children filled in Reading Behaviour Profiles which doubled as simple and easy to analyse achievement logs. The results extrapolated from these clearly demonstrate that the activity has at least maintained, and for many increased, reading ability and literacy levels.

Contact Elaine Adams, District Manager, Essex County Council (01268 288533)

Fun – Not to be underestimated is the fact that the cultural services and tourism are enjoyable. People learn by taking part in them but they are likely to be enjoying themselves while they are doing it.

cultural services

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mapping cultural services and lifelong learning

The range of policy initiatives relevant to those in the cultural services and/or lifelong learning is broad and the speed of change rapid. This presents a considerable challenge for those seeking to maximise the outcomes of partnership working.

Making links

This section aims to identify some of the major national initiatives which present opportunities for links between cultural services and lifelong learning. Some are led by the Department for Culture Media and Sport, some are led by the Department for Education and Employment and a few are led by other government departments. All have major implications for local authorities and their key partners.

The challenge for both national and local government is to move away from the "silo" approach which sees individual services or initiatives in isolation and to move towards a "cross-cutting" approach which identifies the same outcomes regardless of the means of delivery.

Strategic Planning is of increasing importance within local government. The range of statutory and discretionary planning processes is broad (some would say, daunting). There are plans which relate to education and learning (e.g. Education Development Plans, Lifelong Learning Development Plans), cultural services (e.g. Local and Regional Cultural Strategies, Annual Library Plans) and also corporate plans which cut across all sectors.

The challenge for local authorities is to ensure that these plans cross-reference and aim at the same outcomes.

There are barriers which might prevent this happening. For example: incompatible timetables; competition for resources; a fragmented or silo/divisional approach to planning; the sheer weight of paperwork.

The LGA believes that co-ordinated planning is the key to gaining maximum benefit in terms of outcomes for lifelong learning.

There are a number of recent initiatives which can help to achieve a better co-ordination in planning. The most important of these is **Best Value**, under which authorities will have to review all services on a five year cycle and publish a Best Value Performance Plan which demonstrates how they are meeting a range of nationally and locally set performance indicators. The authority-wide breadth of Best Value raises the potential of considering service-specific and cross-cutting issues in a more holistic manner. The duty to review services against a specified timetable means that those working in cultural services and lifelong learning have opportunities to contribute to each other's review process and examine how they can deliver some of the required outcomes mutually.



Specific initiatives

In May 1998, the Government proposed the creation of **Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships** to deliver a National Childcare Strategy covering children aged 0-14. Each local authority submits an Early Years Development and Childcare Plan for approval from the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. There is a Government target to see 66% of three year olds in free education by 2002. The Partnerships are intended to integrate educational opportunities with childcare and to develop partnerships across the private, public and voluntary sectors. The input of organisations working in children's play (in the private, public and voluntary sectors) is only the most obvious link with the cultural services. The library sector, for example, might also contribute by means of "Books for babies/Bookstart" schemes which provide parents with a "starter pack" at the time of the child's 8 month health check.

All Our Futures

The report *All our Futures* was published in 1999 as the findings of the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education, chaired by Professor Ken Robinson. The report has the joint imprimatur of the Departments of Culture, Media and Sport and Education and Employment.

The LGA warmly welcomed the report and views it as an important advance in the way in which creativity is viewed as an important part of learning. Crucially, the report does not restrict itself to a narrow definition of either "creativity" or "learning". For example, it recognises that creativity is essential to scientific progress and industrial design. The skills which a creative education brings are uniquely suited to the modern employment market: "They [employers] want people who can adapt, see connections, innovate, communicate and work with others" (p13).

Arts for Empowerment

Chester City Council are in the second year of a four year project using arts-based projects and training activities to encourage social and economic regeneration in the West Chester SRB area. The project has several target groups but prioritises young people. There are several strands including: Arts for Empowerment, which develops personal development and community capacity building through the arts as a means of communication and training; Arts for Employment - helping people to develop arts based skills which can access employment opportunities in the creative industries as well as developing more general employment-related skills.

Contact: Paul Gover, Head of Culture, Chester City Council (01244 324324)

Improving Customer Care

Bolton's Tourism and Promotions Unit originally developed the "Ambassadors to Bolton" initiative as a pilot project in 1995 to improve the skills and local knowledge of front line staff who regularly come into contact with visitors to the town. Incorporating the ETB's nationally accredited "Welcome Host" programme, the Ambassadors initiative added two innovative elements - a familiarisation visit to local attractions and a half-day "introduction to guiding skills". The initiative has since attracted participants from North West Trains, Greater Manchester Police, the Bolton Evening News, local coach operators, retailers and voluntary organisations. The initiative has recently been relaunched and expects to have a minimum take up of 300 people during 2000.

Contact: Geoffrey Bennette, Tourism and Promotions Manager, Bolton Metro (01204 522311)

The report also sets out to demonstrate how creative education has a role in raising standards, developing basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, encouraging excluded individuals to return to learning and developing a curriculum that is culturally diverse.

The Report makes a wide range of recommendations for review of the National Curriculum, teacher training, developing partnerships, utilising new technologies, and accessing funding and resources.

making links

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Learning Partnerships comprise representatives from bodies such as FE colleges, careers services, TECs, local authorities and schools. They aim to widen participation in learning and deliver on National and Local Learning targets. The Government Policy Statement of 17 January 2000 described how the Partnerships would continue to provide information on local need to the **Learning and Skills Councils** which will operate from 2001.



Representation from the cultural services on the Partnerships is variable and one of the aims of this paper is to encourage a greater awareness of how the cultural services can contribute to National and Local Learning Targets and ought therefore to be key partners in the Partnerships.

The **Learning and Skills Council** arises from the White paper *Learning To Succeed* and the Social Exclusion Unit report *Bridging the Gap*. It will have responsibility for planning and funding all post 16 education, from April 2001. There will be 47 local LSCs. The LGA hopes to see the Learning Partnerships already established, having a strong role in setting the priorities for the Learning and Skills Councils. The LGA also hopes to see the Learning and Skills Councils acknowledging the views represented in this paper. In particular:

- The cultural services as an expanding sector with training needs of its own
- The cultural services as a vehicle for encouraging people to stay in or return to learning
- Cultural services agencies as key partners

The first point has been especially emphasised by the national strategy *Tomorrow's Tourism* and the work of the DCMS's **Creative Industries Task Group**. The cultural services and tourism are increasingly important drivers in the national economy and are attracting more people each year to seek employment in the sector. With this comes the need to develop training and learning opportunities to ensure that those working in the sector maintain the standards and competitive edge which the UK currently has.

For Local Education Authorities, the **Education Development Plan** is a statement of proposals setting out the authority's performance targets and school improvement programme. Like the other plans in this section, it benefits from an holistic approach which should acknowledge the role of the cultural services. *All Our Futures*, referred to above, demonstrates how these services can improve standards in schools.

Three strategic planning processes could cement better links between the lifelong learning agencies and the cultural sector. These strategies enable those in the cultural sector to identify how they can contribute to learning outcomes and present those in the learning and education sectors with a reference point to key cultural partners.

Local Cultural Strategies are currently being piloted by fourteen authorities prior to the publication of guidance by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2000. The Local Cultural Strategy aims to set out how an authority aims to deliver the full range of its cultural services and presents an opportunity for authorities to identify how its cultural services contribute to authority wide objectives. This means that Local Cultural Strategies can link explicitly into lifelong learning objectives in a pro-active way. At the very least, the document can provide those working in lifelong learning with an overview of how the cultural services have a strategic approach within the authority.

Learning from our elders

Nottingham's Museums Outreach Team coordinate several reminiscence projects which link with a variety of partners and link in with wider objectives such as promoting cultural diversity and awareness.

The Pakistan Jubilee Project a reminiscence project with Pakistani Elders was funded by the European Year against Racism and led to a training manual exploring issues around racism which is used in schools and museums.

Contact: Jocelyn Dodd, Castle Museum, City of Nottingham (0115 9153670)

Improving literacy

Kick Off! is an initiative which aims to encourage young males to sustain an interest in reading. One of the most successful and innovative parts of this initiative was the Dads into Schools Day where fathers received training in reading to children as well as "hands on" experience of being in a school. The initiative brought together a range of partners including school and social services groups, Windsor Leisure Centre, Maidenhead Library, the Education Business Partnership, McDonalds, WH Smiths, the Maidenhead Advertiser and Maidenhead FC. The scheme was devised by Launch Pad as part of the National Year of Reading.

Contact: David Lunn, Chief Executive, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (01628 798888)

Promoting diversity

Telford Chinese School – the school was established in 1995 to cater for the social, cultural and educational needs of the local Chinese community. The school operates as a charitable trust and as well as providing lessons in Mandarin and Cantonese acts as a focus for the promotion of Chinese Culture. Courses are provided in Tai Chi, music and art. The school has been so successful that local residents from without the Chinese community have begun to attend classes and the school has also acted as a factor in being able to attract inward investment from businesses in the Far East.

Contact: John Gilbert, Head of Leisure, Culture and Community Services, Telford and Wrekin Council (01952 202100)

partnerships

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The DCMS has established Regional Cultural Consortia in each of the English regions with a view to them developing a **Regional Cultural Strategy** which in turn will relate to the strategies being developed by the Regional Development Agencies. Regional Cultural Strategies would be informed by the Local Cultural Strategies described above. The Regional Strategies offer an opportunity to co-ordinate culture and learning links across a range of agencies, including the local Learning and Skills Councils.

Libraries have a crucial role in the delivery of lifelong learning outcomes. The statutory **Annual Library Plan** (introduced in 1998) provides a transparent and flexible approach for each authority to outline its targets in relation to a number of headings including lifelong learning. The introduction of published **standards** for public libraries from 2000 will set planning in a context of improving service delivery.



The development of the **People's Network** (also known as the New Library Network) – which now has initial funding in place through channels such as the DCMS/Wolfson Challenge Fund and the New Opportunities Fund – will enable libraries to deliver ICT-based learning materials in a co-ordinated manner.

The New Opportunities Fund **Community Access to Lifelong Learning** Programme as well as providing the initial funding for the People's Network, will make available around £100 million for Community Grids for Learning. These present opportunities for a range of partners, including those in the cultural services, to create new initiatives which promote learning which is inclusive and allied to local priorities.

The role of **new technology** will be vital in creating access to learning for all parts of the community. As well as the People's Network, the National Grid for Learning and the University for Industry (now learndirect) will provide between them opportunities for schoolchildren and adult learners. The importance of the cultural services in providing content as well as being part of the infrastructure should be fully appreciated.

At a national level, the **Department of Culture, Media and Sport** has established as one of its key priorities "the nurturing of educational opportunity". To promote this objective of the nurturing of educational opportunity, the DCMS has established a unit within the department to explore links with the Department of Education and Employment.

conclusion

Lifelong learning is central to delivering the economic and social objectives of national and local government. Without a learning population, it will be impossible to address challenges such as tackling exclusion, creating employment, regenerating our communities or promoting healthy living and individual well-being. Lifelong learners do not, however, fall into clearly defined groups. There are as many ways of learning as there are learners. Some learners do not identify with formal approaches. Some learners have ambitions which do not sit easily with outcomes such as external accreditation. Others are happy in a formal setting but will miss out on a range of valuable experiences if the course they are following is limited in outlook.

Of all the services which local authorities deliver, the cultural services can lay claim to being the one which most values flexibility, diversity and a dedication to improving the quality of life. Through partnership with those in the cultural services, those aiming to deliver lifelong learning can develop a range of approaches which meet the needs of all types of learner. Without reference to the cultural services, lifelong learning risks becoming narrow, exclusive and fragmented. The current period of change in all sectors of education, lifelong learning, culture and tourism presents a unique opportunity to create a fully inclusive Learning Age.

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This discussion paper was first presented to the LGA Culture and Tourism Conference at Bristol in March 2000. The paper is also available on the LGA website www.lga.gov.uk

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Published by LGA Publications for
the Local Government Association
Local Government House
Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ
Tel. 020 7664 3000
Fax 020 7664 3030

Photos: Jon Walter

Cover L1015
ISBN 1 84048 185 1

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